

RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2023
#RHSCheelsea

BIRMINGHAM'S PARKS



STAND NO.
GPE 071



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There are 631 Parks and Open Spaces in Birmingham covering 3,700 hectares – but this wasn't always the case. As the city moved into the industrial age, access to good quality parkland was limited to those who could pay or travel out of the rapidly-developing Birmingham.

The city was doubling in size, building homes close together with only a courtyard for outside space. These back-to-back buildings not only were residential but were small factories, including butchers and slaughterhouses.

The condition people were living in led to the Public Health Act 1848 and the rise of a small

band of people who were dedicated to provide a free park network for the residents of Birmingham.

This display tells this story with a representation of a row of back-to-backs. There were over 2,000 of these courtyards across Birmingham with over 50,000 people living in them.

In 1849, Robert Rawlinson, a drainage engineer, started the call for public parks. He recognised the need to improve drainage and give people access to quality open spaces to relax, participate in sport and breathe a better quality of air.



This was a reference to the city's Botanical Gardens, which opened in 1832 but charged one penny for entry, except on a Monday – when most people were at work.

The Mayor, James Baldwin responded to the growing pressure in 1853 and passed a resolution for the council to ask parliament for the power to enable the council to accept grants and to purchase land to be used as places of recreation.

A number of influential people then started to join the call for parks in Birmingham.

In 1850, Charles MacKay, a special correspondent from the Morning Chronicle, criticised Birmingham when Colmore Row was developed with the loss of trees and open space. In his column he wrote: "The public require a park where they may stroll without payment not only on a Monday but on every day".

In 1854, the Birmingham Parks Act came into force.

In 1856, Adderley Park was then opened as Birmingham's public free park.

A series of land donations saw a number of parks open to residents, but often with a series of restrictions and conditions.



Louisa Ryland is the unsung hero for Birmingham parks, donating several pieces of land, helping to fund the purchases of other parks and paying for others to be designed.

In 1873, Cannon Hill Park was one of these, and opened in September of that year. Cannon Hill is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year. The display includes a replica of the bandstand, the dovecote that was in the park and a central bed of traditional Victorian plants. The planting around the central bed is softer and more typical of the schemes found across the park network. Three giant tulips symbolise the importance the flower has had in horticulture, with traditionally over one million planted across the parks. Cannon Hill Park had a tulip festival each year until the 1970s.



The fountain was part of the show house situated in Cannon Hill Park. Many of the plants on display in the show house are now planted in the open park. Around the display there are gardeners tending the display. Over 400 people work across the park network in Birmingham, often unseen but carefully maintaining each park and growing all of the plants used.

The display also features photographs of the parks service through the years and displays exhibited at previous Chelsea Flower Shows.



GARDEN DESIGNED BY

Birmingham City Council and
Dame Floella Benjamin.

All of the flowering plants have been produced and grown in the city's nurseries, and all of the structural plants are cared for in our special show hot house. Flowering plants include Impatiens New Guinea ColourPower, Antirrhinum Liberty Classic, Gerbera, Hydrangea, Nicotiana Perfume, Dahlia Hybrida and Anemone Harmony.

#BeBoldBeBham

